



News Release

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‘Share the Memories’

Families of teen crash victims share their grief

(Salt Lake City, UT). Car crashes are the number one cause of death for teens across the U.S. In 2013, 18 families were devastated to learn that their teenager had been killed in a motor vehicle incident on Utah roads. Today, they shared their stories to encourage others to drive safely and buckle up.

Melissa Brown’s 16-year-old daughter, Amanda, was a passenger in a single vehicle rollover on June 28, 2013. Amanda was with two friends when the driver of the pickup truck she was riding in overcorrected and lost control. The truck rolled down an embankment six times. None of the teens were wearing a seat belt. Amanda and her friend, Tyler Stuart, were both ejected and the 18-year-old driver suffered a broken back. Tyler died instantly, while Amanda suffered severe head trauma and died a few days later.

“We miss her and love her so much,” said Brown. “This is a sad tragedy that changed three families’ lives forever. As parents, the most important thing we can do is to talk to our teens about wearing their seat belts.”

Teens have the lowest seat belt usage rate of any age group. In 2013, nearly three-fourths of all teens killed on Utah roads were not restrained. “The simple decision to choose to wear your seat belt every time you are in a vehicle can and does save lives,” said Carlos Braceras, UDOT Executive Director. “If I could change a single behavior of every Utahn, it would be to make sure they are always buckled up, no matter what.”

This is the seventh year the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) and Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) have collected stories of teens killed in motor vehicle crashes. The book

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will be used by state and local agencies as a prevention tool to help young drivers realize the impact their decisions have on others. The books will also be distributed to high school driver education classes in the state.

Joycelyn Weese lost her 18-year-old son, Devereaux (Dev), in an auto-pedestrian crash. Dev was hit and killed as he crossed the street on his bicycle. The driver was distracted by a cell phone. “My son lost his life because someone thought their phone was more important than paying attention to the road,” said Weese. “No phone call or text is worth taking someone else’s life.”

Data from the Utah Highway Safety Office show that in 2013, 23 teen drivers were involved in a fatal crash, killing more than two dozen people, including six of the teen drivers. Teen drivers were also 1.3 times more likely to have a contributing factor, such as speeding, in a fatal crash than drivers of other ages.

“Policies such as Utah’s Graduated Driver Licensing laws and efforts by our state and community partners have saved lives,” said David Patton, UDOH Executive Director. “In 2012, for the first time in more than a decade, teen drivers did not have the highest crash rates. We are making a difference and the goal of zero fatalities on Utah roads is within reach.”

“The book we’ve compiled shows the ripple effect our driving decisions can have on our families, friends, and communities,” said Jenny Johnson, UDOH Violence and Injury Prevention Program. “These teens’ memories will live on, and their stories will not be forgotten.”

To download a copy of the book *Share the Memories: Remembering 10 Lives Lost on Utah Roads*, visit www.health.utah.gov/vipp or www.dontdrivestupid.com.

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